



PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING MINUTES

The slight that led to Canada's flag



The Canadian Red Ensign, the national flag of Canada from 1957 to 1965
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Canadian_Red_Ensign.svg

During the Suez Crisis Egyptian President Nasser objected to Canadian troops for the UNEF peace-keeping force. Not only did Canada's flag, the Red Ensign, have a British Union Jack in the corner, but also some battalions wore British-looking uniforms. The similarities played upon Egyptian concerns of Canadian neutrality. According to Canadian historian Jack Granatstein, "It required extraordinary efforts by General Burns, (UN Secretary General) Dag Hammarskjold, and the Canadian Ambassador in Cairo, Herbert Norman, to persuade the Egyptians to allow Canada to contribute not the 1(st Battalion) Queen's Own Rifles but the logistical support UNEF needed to function."

The slight stuck with External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson. When he entered Canadian politics his goal was to have an unmistakably Canadian flag. However, even when Pearson became Prime Minister, the path to that distinctive flag was rocky. The Red Ensign was the flag that Canadian troops had carried into the battles of WWII. John Diefenbaker, head of the Opposition, led the charge for its retention.

An extensive 1958 poll of Canadian adults showed 80% wanted a national flag entirely different from that of any other nation; 60% wanted that distinctive flag

to include a maple leaf. The debates raged on inside and outside parliament until a new flag committee in September 1964 looked at 3,541 designs to decide finally upon the version that now represents Canada. The decision was ratified by parliament after debate, filibuster and closure.

Queen Elizabeth signed a Royal Proclamation for Canada's Red Maple Leaf Flag in January 1965 when both Prime Minister Pearson and Leader of the Opposition Diefenbaker were in London attending the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill.

It was the end of an era and the beginning of another.

Canadians raise first official flag

http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/language_culture/topics/80/

Proclamation

<http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/ap/c/c135374.jpg>